

Mr. Chairman, it bears repeating, the statistics we have heard so many times about the language that is in this bill and what is not in this bill. There are at least 10 provisions in the bill that prohibit U.S. foreign assistance from being used to promote or perform abortions. In many of these countries, abortion is illegal. That could not be more clear.

I want to thank Chairwoman Lowey for her leadership on this bill and for including this commonsense, common ground, family planning provision to include contraceptives only, and not funding.

I rise today in strong support of both the Lowey amendment and of the contraceptives-only provision in the bill, and in opposition to the Smith amendment.

Under current U.S. policy, too many people in the developing world, especially Africa, contraceptives are in short supply, placing the health and well-being of millions of people at risk. President Bush has recognized the crisis and proposed a major Africa initiative.

The very specific and narrowly tailored language of Chairwoman Lowey's language allows the U.S. to provide contraceptives only so NGOs can provide contraceptives in developing countries. This provision is, as I say, a commonsense, common ground solution to a very real problem. This provision will reduce the number of unintended pregnancies, help prevent abortions and help stem the spread of disease, including HIV-AIDS.

The far-reaching impacts of this provision are immeasurable. This will make a substantive difference in the lives of women and families around the world by allowing them to protect themselves and plan and space their births. It will help slow rapid population growth, which results in poverty and instability. It will help stop the spread of HIV-AIDS.

I urge all my colleagues who are committed to family planning to oppose the Smith amendment, vote to support the Lowey amendment and the underlying bill.